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ON THE WEIGHT OF THE BRAIN IN THE NEGRO.

To the Editor of the Anthropological Review.

SIR,—In the article of the last number of the *Anthropological Review*, entitled “The Negro as a Soldier,” said to be a “valuable report by Sandford B. Hunt, M.D.,” there is, at p. 51, what is entitled an “Ethnographical Table,” which appears really to be a *table of the weight of the brain* in four hundred and five soldiers, who died during the late war in the United States, and whose autopsies were “made under the direction of Surgeon Ira Russell.” This table is, perhaps, not so well authenticated as might have been desired, as, from the above statement, it cannot be quite unhesitatingly attributed to Dr. Ira Russell, and, next, no particulars are given with respect to the mode adopted in determining the weight of the brain. We are left in doubt, whether the brains were divested of their membranes and drained of their fluids, and whether the *medulla oblongata* were reckoned a portion of the brain and weighed with it, as is most likely to have been the case.

The determination of the weights of the brains of 405 adult men, in all probability in the vigour of life, by actual metrological observation, was in itself an investigation of very great interest and importance. Hence it is much to be regretted that there should be any doubt whether means were taken to render the observations as definite and exact as possible, and that explanations have not been given, so that the observations might be fully understood and perfectly relied upon.

Of the brains enumerated in this table, 141 are those of “black,” that is Negro, men. The average weight of the brain in these 141 Negroes is stated to have been 46·96 ounces avoirdupois. The largest weighed 56 ounces, the least 35·75 ozs., and, in other respects, they stood in these relations:—5 weighed between 55 and 60 ozs. ; 42 between 50 and 55 ozs. ; 51 between 45 and 50 ozs. ; 38 between 40 and 45 ozs. ; and 3 between 35 and 40 ozs. It will be seen that this enumeration accounts for only 139 of the brains, not the 141 of the table.

The writer, after giving the above table, next speaks of the same series of autopsies made by Dr. Ira Russell, in which the weight of the brain is given in the same number of cases, viz. 405, adding, “of which 24 were white and 391 black,” *i.e.*, reckoning all those to be black who had any degree of Negro blood.

But the point to which I particularly wish to draw the attention of

your readers is the general conclusion, as to the average weight of the Negro's brain. This deserves to be made a little more conspicuous than is done in the table. It is stated to be 46·96 ozs. av., which is as nearly as possible 47 ozs. Probably the most accurate and reliable previous observations on the weight of the brain of the Negro, ascertained by actual weighing, are those of Professor John Reid and of Dr. T. B. Peacock.* The average brain-weight of the Negro men was 44·34 ozs., that of the women 43·50 ozs., the mean of the sexes being 43·92 ozs.; but it is with the men whose average brain-weight was 44·34 ozs. that we have to do, when we compare this with that of the Negro soldier, which was larger, viz., 46·96 oz. In the tables formed by myself† the following results of the brain-weights of *male* Negroes come out. In 12 skulls of "tribes unknown" the average was 44·30 ozs.; in a Joloff, 46·92 ozs.; in a Foulah, 43·42 ozs.; in a Mandingoe, 47·14 ozs.; in a Sergia, 46·92 ozs.; in a Fantee, 41·60 ozs.; in 3 Ashantees, 42·91 ozs.; in 5 Dahomans, 46·63 ozs.; in 2 Bakeles, 50·57 ozs.; and in 2 Congos, 39·76 ozs. These yield an average of 45 ounces. The weight of the brain of the male Guinea Negro examined by Professor L. Calon was only 44·44 ozs.‡ So that Dr. Ira Russell's experiments afford a brain-weight for the male Negro rather heavier, from one to two ounces heavier, than those of other observers. Dr. S. B. Hunt allows that this weight is "over five ounces *less* than that of the white."

He next goes into the speculation whether what we name civilisation, freedom, and education, "the new nationality of America," has the effect of enlarging the brain, to which, as he remarks, general opinion leads. But, if this were so, we must attribute the large brains of the American Negro soldiers to some such influences in their cases, to which it is certain Dr. S. B. Hunt would not consent. The influences to which the Negro of the United States has been exposed are characterised by the *absence* of those which are supposed to enlarge the brain; thus Dr. S. B. Hunt's table proves too much; it proves that Negroes in a state of slavery have heavier brains than those in Africa, at the same time that it contradicts or refutes the above speculation. There is, however, not any good ground to think that the speculation, or the arguments founded upon it, are of any particular value. The weight of the brain, like all the other peculiarities of human races, is a *race character*, appertaining to each race specifically.

* "On the Weight of the Brain of the Negro, *Memoirs of the Anthropol. Soc. of London*, vol. i, p. 65 and 520.

† "Contributions towards determining the weight of the Brain in different Races of Men," *Philosophical Transactions*, 1868, p. 505.

‡ "The Brain of a Negro of Guinea," *Anthrop. Review*, No. xxii, 1868, p. 279.

In Dr. S. B. Hunt's concluding remark this position is hardly sufficiently attended to. He says "they (the American Negroes) have already the same cranial capacity with the Hindostanees, who have developed a high civilisation, a profound philosophy and a rational religion." Here Dr. S. B. Hunt is disposed to underrate the Negro of America, for he has, according to the table, a larger average brain-weight than the natives of Hindostan, whether we allow to the latter "a high civilisation, a profound philosophy, and a rational religion," or not. Dr. S. B. Hunt is, no doubt, comparing the civilisation, philosophy, and religion of the two races, Negroes and Hindostanees. In the tables above referred to the male Hindoos are shown to have a mean brain-weight of 44·22 ozs., and the mean of Dr. S. G. Morton's table was still less, only 41·74 ozs. So that we have a comparatively "high civilisation, a profound philosophy, and a rational religion" developed among a people who are distinguished among human races for the remarkable smallness of their brains.

If you consider these remarks of sufficient importance, please to give them a place in your next number.

I am, your obedient servant,

J. BARNARD DAVIS.

Shelton, Hanley, Staffordshire, March 2, 1869.

MAUDSLEY ON PHYSIOLOGY AND PATHOLOGY OF THE BRAIN.*

It is not very long since mental diseases have been considered as a kind of felony, and the poor patients treated as criminals, put into chains, imprisoned and condemned to corporal punishment, until the great Pinel came forward as an attorney for the poor and unhappy lunatics and pleaded their case in a most simple but very successful manner. His work, *Traité Medico-Philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (Paris, 1808), is one of the brightest ornaments in medical literature, and the success gained one of the most noble triumphs in the history of humanity.

We cannot wonder that under circumstances when mental maladies were considered the work of the devil, the treatment consisted in exorcisms, and the most perverted means were used in order to get rid of the evil spirit. Pathological anatomy remained silent, and thus

* *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind.* By Henry Maudsley, M.D. Lond., Physician to the West London Hospital, etc., etc. London: Macmillan & Co.